

5 CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

This section of the plan offers a summary of physical conditions along the corridor:

5.1 Land Use, Zoning & Development

This section presents a summary of findings from the team's analysis of land use, zoning and development conditions along H Street, including a review of the aspects of historic preservation and how it may impact development on the corridor. The summary is organized around the following:

- Blocks & Lots;
- Land Area & Ownership;
- Land Use;
- Occupancy;
- Zoning; and
- Historic Preservation.

Blocks & Lots

The pattern of blocks and lots along H Street exerts a strong influence on the scale and form of development. The existing pattern is a direct legacy of Pierre L'Enfant's Plan (c. 1792) for the District. As with most of the District's lettered streets (with the exception of those leading to public buildings or markets), H Street was designated in the L'Enfant Plan for a 90-foot right-of-way and, eventually, the blocks were subdivided in small residential lots. By the 1880s (as shown in a city view prepared by Adolph Sachse, c. 1882-1883), the street's

early residential character had taken form. The drawing shows the main building of the Little Sisters of the Poor with the rest of the H Street frontage lined with either 2-3 story townhouses or narrow vacant lots.

As the surrounding neighborhoods developed and H Street's role as a travel corridor grew, the balance of uses started shifting from residential to commercial/institutional. By the mid-twentieth century, 2-3 story buildings with commercial first-floor storefronts and upper story residential or storage uses occupied virtually all the frontage from 2nd to 15th Streets, with the important exception of churches and institutions.

Blocks along H Street range in length from 270' (the block frontages between 4th and 5th Streets and 5th and 6th Streets) to 770' (the block frontage between 15th and 14th Streets) with typical block frontages measuring 300' to 310'. Typical lot sizes, excluding the few blocks with frontage consolidated in single parcels, range from 1,600 to 2,500 square feet. Widths of these individual lots fall between 18 and 30 feet with typical depths of between 70 and 100 feet.

Land Area & Ownership

The total area of land with frontage along H Street (parcels between 2nd and 15th Streets plus the Hechinger Mall and CVS/Former Sears sites) is 1,684,293 square feet - approximately 39 acres. The Hechinger Mall and CVS/Former Sears sites comprise some 15 acres of this total area or about 40%.

Land Area Overview

Land Area	sf	Area	
		avg sf	acres
H Street Frontage	1,017,481	3,595	23.4
Hechinger Mall & CVS/Former Sears	666,812	222,271	15.3
Totals	1,684,293	5,889	38.7

Much of the land along the corridor is divided into individual or small blocks of private ownership. There are some exceptions of full-block frontages in single ownership; these are more easily developed/redeveloped than several sites under multiple ownership. These blocks are listed below.

Full-Block Frontage in Single Ownership

Block (Square)	Description	Area (sf)
4493	Hechinger Mall	373,627
4491	CVS & Former Sears Site	293,185
	Subtotal	666,812
0859	Site Between 6th & 7th South Side	109,351
0751	Capital Children's Museum Site	104,756
0912	H Street Connection Site	87,052
0752	Site Between 2nd & 3rd South Side	34,444
	Total	1,002,415

In addition, several clusters of smaller parcels in common ownership are located along the corridor; as outlined in the



following table.

Partial Block Frontages in Single Ownership

Block (Square)	Description	Area (sf)
0776	BP/Amoco Site	49,052
0858	Murry's/Former Safeway Site	38,628
1004	Auto Zone Site	33,435
1027	Atlas Theater Site	28,950
0858	H Street Self Store Site	26,725
0982	Old McCrory's Site	13,725
1026	District Library Site	10,800
0833	H Street CDC Site	9,813
Total		221,757

According to tax assessors' records, only 9 parcels along the H Street frontage are held in public ownership, including one small parcel (a 5,000 square foot parcel on the Auto Zone block) and 7 contiguous parcels where the library is located.

Parcels Owned by Redevelopment Land Authority

Block (Square)	Description	Area (sf)
0859	Mid-Block Parcel (Parcel 0835)	296
0982	1100 Block Southside (Parcel 0819)	5,456
1026	Library Site (7 contiguous parcels)	10,800
Total		16,552

Land Use

Property tax records for H Street, including Hechinger Mall and the CVS/Former Sears sites, show the predominant use of parcels as a mix of retail, restaurant and entertainment uses. Parcels with these uses account for approximately 45% of the total land area along the corridor. Vacant parcels/parcels with fully vacant buildings comprise 30% of the total land area. Office uses rank second comprising approximately 15% of total land area.

Summary of Existing Land Uses

Use Category	Land Area	%
Retail, Restaurant, & Entertainment - Hechinger Mall and CVS Site	450,254	27%
Retail, Restaurant, & Entertainment - H Street Frontage	240,927	14%
Vacant Parcel	380,025	22%
Commercial Office	254,004	15%
Public & Institutional	132,815	8%
Vacant Building	124,942	8%
Parking & Vehicle Sales	97,629	6%
Residential	3,697	> 0.01%
Total	1,684,293	100%

Source: Property tax records provided by DC Office of Planning.
Note: Property tax records identify land use for parcels, not for building area. Additionally, they do not take into account mixed use buildings, for example, buildings with retail uses on the ground floor and office space above.)



Occupancy

Approximately 380,000 square feet or 22% of the total land area along the corridor is currently vacant. The largest blocks of vacant land are located at the western and eastern gateways of the site. At the eastern end, the Old Sears site accounts for over 200,000 square feet of the corridor's vacant land. At the western end, the BP/Amoco site and the site across H Street from the Capital Children's Museum account for 50,000 and 35,000 square feet, respectively, of the total. The remaining 95,000 square feet of vacant land is in single sites and small clusters of sites along the corridor.

Occupancy of Parcels

	Area			Parcels	
	sf	Acres	%	#	%
Vacant Parcels	380,025	8.72	22%	54	19%
Occupied Parcels	1,304,268	29.94	78%	232	81%
Total Parcels	1,684,293	38.66	100%	286	100%

Note: Parcels includes H Street Frontage from 2nd Street to 15th Street as well as the Hechinger Mall site and the CVS/Former Sears site.

Building vacancy is a significant issue along the corridor. There are 232 buildings along the corridor; nearly 30% of the corridor's 218 storefront spaces are currently unoccupied, and, of the 83 multi-story buildings, 50% have vacant upper floors. Combined, these vacancies represent 285,000 square feet of space —126,000 on the ground floor and 159,000 in upper stories - or roughly 19% of the approximately 1,500,000 total square footage on the corridor.

Existing Storefront Space

	Area		Buildings	
	sf	%	#	%
Occupied Storefronts	369,107	74%	154	71%
Vacant Storefronts	126,729	26%	64	29%
Total Storefront Space	495,836	100%	218	100%

Notes: Occupied Storefronts includes H Street frontage only; does not include non-storefront buildings such as CCM, Library, churches, Hechinger Mall, & CVS.

Existing Upper Story Space

	Area		Buildings	
	sf	%	#	%
Occupied Upper Floors	532,681	77%	95	53%
Vacant Upper Floors	159,166	33%	83	47%
Total Upper Floors	691,847	100%	178	100%

Note: Total occupied upper floor space includes occupied space in DOES, CCM and Self Store buildings. Upper floors in these buildings accounts for almost 400,000 square feet of occupied upper floor space.

Zoning

The majority of the corridor is zoned C-2. The eastern end and Hechinger Mall areas are zoned C-3. These zones allow both commercial and residential development. In addition, small portions of the corridor are zoned C-M-1, a strictly commercial zone, and R-4, a strictly residential zone. The diagram attached indicates the zoning designation locations and the chart below describes the amount of the land in each zone as defined by the District of Columbia Municipal

Regulations.

The majority of the corridor is built well under allowable density, height and other controls. Zoning constraints do not seem to have acted alone as an impediment to development on the corridor as current limits have not been met. As indicated in the following table, development under current zoning would permit approximately double the amount of building area than currently exists.

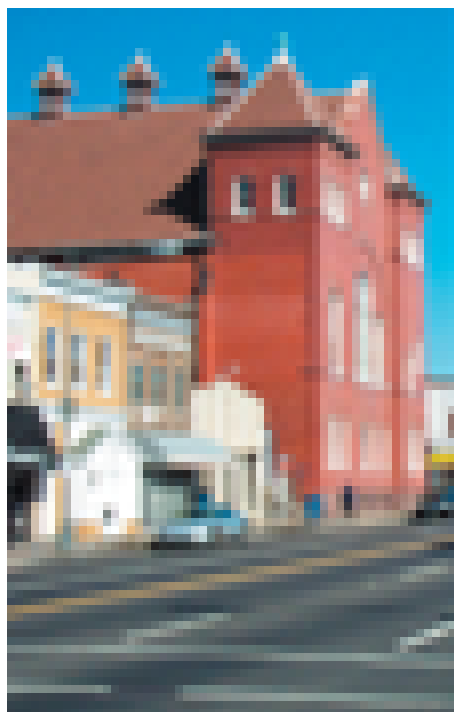
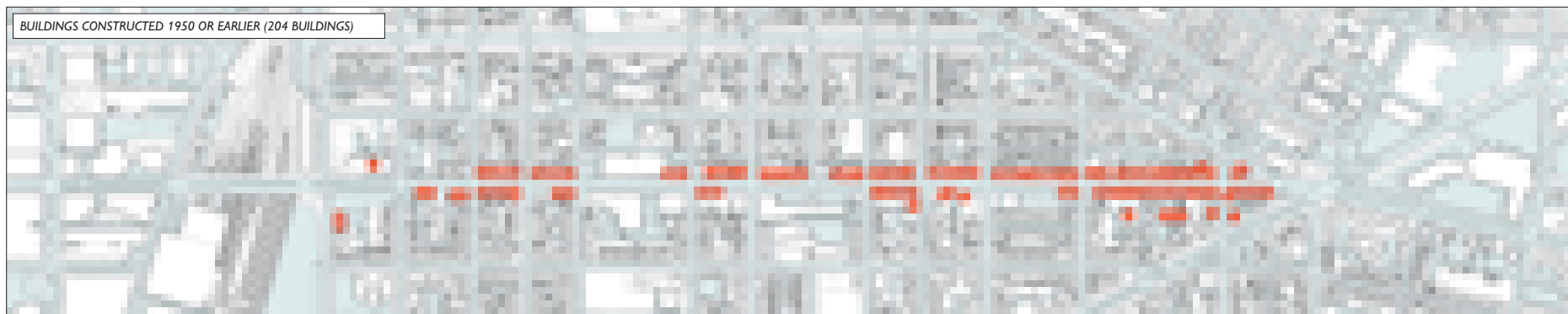
Overview of Zone Controls

Zone District	Permitted Intensity (FAR)				
	Commercial Use Only	With Resident'l	Max. Height	% Lot Cover*	Rear Yard
C-2-A	1.5	2.5	50'	60%	15'
C-2-B	1.5	3.5	65'	80%	15'
C-2-C	2.0	6.0	90'	80%	15'
C-3-A	2.5	4.0	65'	75%	12***
C-M-1	3.0	N/A	40'	N/A	12****

*For residential uses.

**2-1/2 inches per foot of vertical distance from the mean finished grade at the middle of the rear of the structure to the highest point of the main roof or parapet wall, but not less than 12 feet.

***Above 20 feet; the minimum depth of the rear yard shall be 2.5 in/ft of vertical distance from the mean finished grade at the middle of the rear of the structure to the highest point of the main roof of parapet wall, but not less than 12 ft.



Overview of Zoned Land

Zone	Individual Parcels		% of Total
District	#	%	Land Area
C-2-A	238	83	35%
C-2-B	2	0.7	7%
C-2-C	1	0.3	6%
C-3-A	38	13	49%
C-M-1	2	0.7	2%
R-4	5	2	0.5%

Capacity Analysis

Zone District	Existing Area (sf)	Allowable Area (sf)	Underused Area (sf)
R-4	0	8,975	8,975
C-2-A	796,938	875,387	578,449
C-2-B	37,225	182,244	145,019
C-2-C	236,201	218,702	-17,499
C-3-A (H St Frontage)	211,564	393,648	182,084
C-3-A (Hech/Sears)	213,854	1,667,030	1,453,176
C-M-1	0	109,827	109,827
Total	1,495,782	3,455,813	2,960,031

Historic Preservation

This subsection of the report presents a summary of findings related to the preservation and adaptive reuse of the corridor's older, and potentially historically significant, structures. The summary is organized around the following:

- Preservation and Community Revitalization;

- Designation of Historic Sites;
- Significance of Historic Resources along H Street;
- Preservation Incentives; and
- Heritage Development.

Preservation and Community Revitalization. The H Street corridor retains a distinctive collection of historic commercial buildings that reflect the history of the people that lived, worked, and shopped there. Historic preservation may be the best means for the District's residents and visitors to explore H Street's ongoing history and strengthen its sense of place. The H Street corridor and the immediate areas that surround it can benefit from local and national historic designation of its eligible building stock. Potential benefits include federal and local tax credits for property owners who rehabilitate their historic properties, legal protections that encourage the retention of the historic fabric of its buildings, and the development of local heritage tourism opportunities.

Numerous studies have underscored the important role that historic preservation plays in revitalizing older neighborhoods and commercial centers throughout the U.S. It is often the quality and character of historic buildings and settings that attract initial reinvestment in economically blighted areas. Initial reinvestment often starts with a number of small-scale, residential, or small business projects that eventually spark the interest of larger investors.

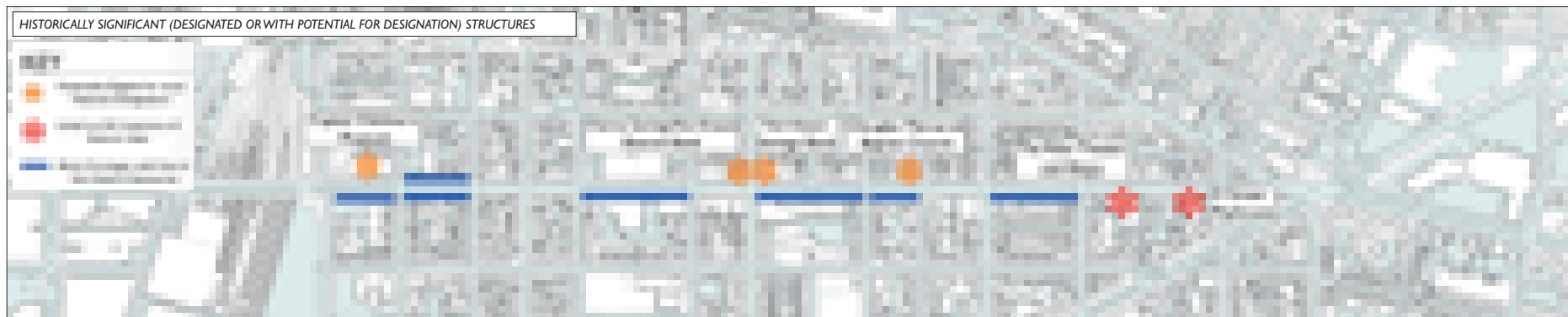
In addition, preservation strategies provide the foundation for successful 'Main Street' revitalization efforts across the country. By focusing on historic preservation and retaining community character, the Main Street program—founded in 1980 by the

National Trust for Historic Preservation—has been extremely successful, becoming one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation. The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of the historic business districts of U.S. towns and cities. Building on a downtown's inherent assets—rich architecture, personal service, and most of all, a sense of place—the Main Street approach strives to rekindle entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation, and civic concern.

In April 2002, the reStore DC selection committee selected the H Street corridor as one of the first five Main Street programs in the city. The program will continue for five years, with funding and professional support provided by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A local board of directors, an executive director, and a series of committees will administer the program.

Designation of Historic Sites and Districts. In the District of Columbia, historic properties are officially recognized by listing on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites (a local designation) and by inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (the federal government's listing of important historic properties). Properties are listed both locally and nationally. District of Columbia and federal designations confer different protections, benefits, and constraints on the historic properties.

The District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites is the city's official list of properties that have been determined worthy of protection due to their historical or cultural



significance. The list was established in 1964 and now includes more than 500 individual sites and two dozen neighborhood historic districts that, together, contain more than 20,000 buildings. Only properties or historic districts approved by the District's Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) are placed on the Inventory; properties or historic districts are nominated by a sponsoring group and approved by the District's Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB).

Inclusion in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites recognizes the historic or cultural value of a property. Designated historic properties are eligible for special consideration under the D.C. Construction Code (Section 513) and for waivers of certain zoning requirements. In addition, local tax benefits are available to some designated historic sites. (See 'Historic Housing Tax Credit,' D.C. Code, Section 47-1806.08).

Buildings and sites that are either individually listed on the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites or located within a historic district are subject to the D.C. Preservation Law (Title 10, Chapter 26 of the District of Columbia's Municipal Regulations). This law requires that the District's HPRB review demolition, new construction and planned exterior alterations to listed properties. The goal of the HPRB is to preserve the historic fabric of designated buildings and sites in the city. The HPRB approves, defers, or denies applications for alterations by determining whether proposed changes are compatible with the historic character of the properties within its purview.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture,

archaeology, engineering, and culture. The list is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) with the assistance of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in each state. In the District of Columbia, the SHPO is part of the Office of Planning (OP).

Individual sites and historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places are recognized as having historic significance in local, state, or national history. National Register listing also confers a level of protection to historic sites by requiring that all federal and state agencies consider the impact of their planning and construction activities on properties that are listed or that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Owners of income-producing properties that are listed on the National Register can apply for credits that equal 20% of the certified total construction costs paid to rehabilitate their property. These credits can be used to offset federal income tax obligations.

Listing on the National Register does not restrict the activities or rights of private property owners. Since land use regulation is traditionally carried out by local governments in accordance with state laws, the federal designation of a historic property does not regulate the actions of private property owners.

Significance of Historic Resources along H Street

Several H Street properties are listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and a number of historic buildings along the corridor qualify as individual sites for both National Register

and local designation. The vast majority of the buildings along H Street would not qualify for individual listing, however; as a group they form a cohesive collection of historic buildings.

Two historic properties on H Street have recently been placed on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites. They are:

- The Mott Motors/Plymouth Theater (currently H Street Playhouse), D.C. Landmark Designation 4/25/2002. Built in 1928 and renovated for use as a movie theater in 1943, the Mott Motors and Plymouth Theater building is a rare survivor of the small-scale, inner-city automobile dealerships which served a vital but largely overlooked role in the transformation of the urban and exurban landscape and American way of life through the transportation revolution made possible by the automobile. The building is also a fairly intact example of a World War II-era theater which catered principally to African Americans, the first such facility in the Near Northeast neighborhood.'
- The Atlas Theater and Shops, D.C. Landmark Designation 10/24/2002. Built in 1938 and designed by prominent theater architect John J. Zink in the Art Moderne style, the Atlas Theater and Shops building is a 'good example of the neighborhood movie house in Washington. It exemplifies the evolution of the motion picture theater type in Washington and served the local residents for thirty-eight years. It is associated with the city's heritage in social, historical, cultural, commercial, and developmental terms.'

Historic Designations

	Local DC Designation	National Register Designation
Who designates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DC HPRB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DC HPRB recommends NPS makes final decision
What is the Purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition Protection of Heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition.
What are the Benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be eligible for local tax credits.* Design controls through review of changes by DC HPRB. Special consideration under the DC Construction Code. Waivers of certain zoning requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible for 20% federal tax credits.** Consideration in federal & DC-funded project planning. Eligible for charitable contribution tax deduction of a historic preservation easement.
What Constraints are there on Designated Properties?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exterior alterations require the approval of the DC HPRB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mandatory design controls; no restrictions on demolition, additions or alterations.***

Abbreviations: DC HPRB = D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board; NPS = National Park Service.

*See 'Historic Housing Tax Credit,' D.C. Code, Section 47-1806.08). As of November 2002, the District government had not included funding for this tax credit in its budget.

**The federal historic rehabilitation tax credit is only available to incoming producing properties such as apartment buildings, office buildings, restaurants or other commercial properties.

***Except when applying for the federal tax credits. This application process requires that the applicant follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation when designing alterations to the subject property. The standards are available online at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standguide/index.htm>.

There are several buildings on the corridor that are, or may be may be, eligible for historic designation, based on their architecture and history. Those buildings that are already are eligible are:

- the former Northeast Savings Bank at 800 H Street (now a local branch of Riggs Bank); and
- the former Douglas Memorial Baptist Church at 1000 H Street;
- Old McCrory's Building, 1121-25 H Street; and
- the former Ourisman Chevrolet Dealership (established 1920, rebuilt 1951) at 624-626 H Street (now H Street Storage).

Those buildings that warrant further study to determine their eligibility include:

- the Little Sisters of the Poor complex at 220 H Street (now the Capital Children's Museum); and
- the former Home Savings Northeast Branch Bank at 720-722 H Street (now a local branch of the Bank of America).

Potential for a Historic District. The corridor contains historically- and aesthetically-linked buildings that reflect the development of the area as a major transportation and commercial corridor from the end of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th century. The corridor retains a distinctive collection of historic commercial buildings that reflect the history of the people that lived, worked, and shopped there. Historic preservation may be the best means for the District's residents and visitors to explore H Street's ongoing history and to strengthen its sense of place. The H Street corridor and the immediate areas that surround it can benefit from local and national historic designation of its eligible building stock. Potential benefits include federal and local tax credits for property owners who rehabilitate their historic properties; local regulation that would encourage the retention of the historic fabric of its buildings, and the development of heritage tourism opportunities.

Despite some large and out-of-character infill development along the H Street corridor; a preliminary, windshield survey of the historic physical fabric of H Street and a review of written histories and documentation indicates that the segment that extends from 4th Street NE on the west to the intersection of Florida and Maryland Avenues, NE on the east contains a sufficient number of historic buildings to justify the exploration

of a potential historic district in the area.

In the case of the H Street corridor; the continuous physical fabric of the historic street facades has been degraded in several places along the corridor where, within the last two decades, older buildings have been replaced or removed. These include the blocks or portions of the following city blocks:

- the south side of H Street between 12th and 13th Streets (site of Auto Zone);
- the south side between 10th and 11th Streets;
- the south side between 8th and 10th Streets (H Street Connection);
- the south side between 6th and 7th Streets (office building);
- the north and south sides between 3rd and 4th Streets; and
- on the south side between 2nd and 3rd Streets.

The process for establishing a designated historic district, either national or local, would involve the physical documentation of each individual building or site within the potential district; the development of a series of historic contexts that are illustrated by the individual buildings and by the group of buildings as a whole; the assessment of the district's level of integrity; and a determination of the areas of significance and period of significance for the district. To define a boundary for a potential historic district on the H Street corridor; further historical study and physical documentation of its buildings will be required.

Preservation Incentives. Owners of historic buildings and buildings contributing to the significance of a historic district are eligible for several incentive programs. Federal tax credit programs provide incentives for historic preservation through targeted tax credits for owners who rehabilitate historic properties. For income-producing (commercial or rental) properties listed on the National Register individually, or as contributing properties within listed historic districts, property owners can apply for credits that equal 20% of the certified costs that they pay to rehabilitate their properties. These credits can be used to offset federal income tax obligations.

The federal government also offers a 10% tax credit to property owners who rehabilitate buildings constructed before 1936, as long as the buildings are not already listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are not contributing buildings within a listed historic district. The 10% federal tax credit applies to non-residential, commercial properties where a specified percentage of the existing structure is retained during the rehabilitation project.

Owners of designated historic properties can also obtain substantial tax benefits by donating a preservation easement to a qualified charitable or government organization. A preservation easement is a voluntary legal arrangement that protects a historic, archaeological or cultural resource by providing assurance to the owner that the property's intrinsic historical value will be preserved through subsequent ownership. When the owner donates an easement to a charitable or governmental organization, he can claim a charitable deduction on federal income tax. In most cases an easement donor may deduct the value of the easement, for up to 30% of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income, from federal taxes. The value of the easement is based on the difference between the appraised fair market value of the property prior to conveying an easement and its value with the easement restrictions in place.

Several states offer historic preservation tax credits at the state level. The District of Columbia provides a 'Targeted Historic Housing Tax Credit' for owners of properties in certain targeted historic districts. The law provides income tax credits for up to 35% of the expense of rehabilitating historic houses. (See D.C. Code, Section 47-1806.08; Note: As of November 2002, the District government had not included funding for this tax credit in its budget.). Properties in the H Street corridor can benefit from H Street's inclusion in the District's preservation incentives program.

Sample Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Project for a Designated Historic Building

Description	Monetary	
	Value	Notes
Acquisition Price	\$100,000	
Land Portion	\$20,000	
Building Portion	\$80,000	
Rehabilitation Expenditures	\$200,000	Generally, the cost of rehabilitation must exceed the value of the building portion.
Amount of Tax Credit	\$40,000	\$200,000 × 20%
Investor's Marginal Tax Rate	36%	
Annual Credit Allowable	\$9,000	\$25,000 × 36% Under passive loss exception of tax code

Adapted from the National Trust For Historic Preservation's Preservation Information Booklet: 'A Guide to Tax-Advantaged Rehabilitation,' by Jayne F. Boyle, Stuart Ginsburg and Sally Oldham, revised by Donovan D. Rypkema, 1994.

Heritage Development. Historic preservation maintains and enhances the historic character of a community and helps to create places that attract visitors who want to experience local history. Heritage tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the travel industry and is a proven economic development tool for historic areas.

Founded in 1996, the District of Columbia's Heritage Tourism Coalition utilizes the District's past to promote the vibrant history of D.C. and the city 'beyond the monuments.' The Coalition's members include nearly every museum and cultural organization in the District as well as neighborhood groups, community development corporations, faith-based organizations, WMATA and the National Capital Region of the National Park Service.

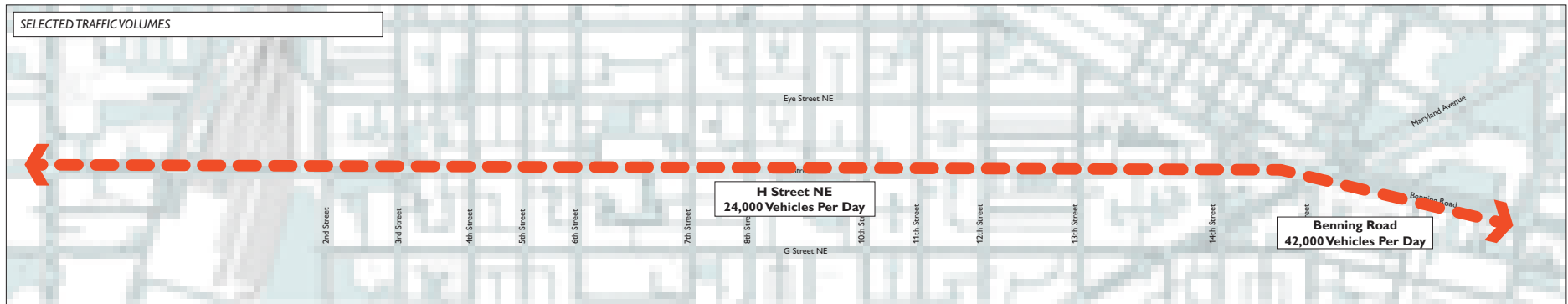
The Coalition develops programs that encourage the growth of heritage tourism throughout the city. Most of its efforts focus on areas outside the city's major tourist destinations on the Mall. In collaboration with WMATA, the Washington Convention Center, the National Endowment for the

Humanities, and the Historical Society of Washington D.C., the Coalition has initiated a 'Beyond the Monuments' campaign to promote neighborhoods as tourist destinations.

In October 2001, the Near Northeast Citizens Against Crime and Drugs initiated a multi-year cultural study to develop an understanding of the specific historic contexts that apply to H Street. The first phase of the project was funded through a federal Historic Preservation Fund grant and resulted in a written narrative history of the neighborhood which is summarized in the brochure that can be viewed at <http://www.hstreetdc.com/cultstudy/nnebroad1.pdf>. Using the historical data collected through this research project, people who live and work along the H Street corridor can capitalize on the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition's expertise and programs to promote itself as a travel destination.

5.2 Retail Environment

A detailed review of existing retail conditions for H Street has been provided separately in Chapter 4.



5.3 Traffic, Transit & Parking

This section presents a summary of findings from the planning team's analysis of transportation conditions along H Street. The summary is organized around the following:

- Traffic and Street Operations;
- Parking Analysis;
- Bus Transit Conditions;
- Bicycle Conditions;
- Pedestrian Conditions; and
- Truck Loading Issues.

Traffic and Street Operations

H Street is used during the morning and evening rush periods as a commuter route into and out of the downtown core for residents who live in the eastern part of the District and in the Prince George's County suburbs. According to the Department of Public Works (DPW) 1999 ADT Maps, the 'Average Daily Traffic' (ADT) volume for H Street (24,000 vehicles per day) is approximately the same as the ADT volume for U Street (23,000 vehicles per day). In addition, the average daily traffic volume for H Street is approximately half as heavy as the ADT volume for Benning Road (42,000 vehicles per day) and lower than many other similarly sized roadways with the exception of U Street. H Street has a higher average traffic volume than Bladensburg Road (with 17,000 vehicles per day) and Maryland Avenue (with 8,000 vehicles per day).

While the purpose of this study is to determine how H Street NE should be redeveloped and to facilitate a more pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-oriented roadway, it is important to remember that H Street is an important east-west route for morning and evening auto commuters. As a result, H Street's function as an important auto commuter route should be incorporated into the new design of the roadway, in addition to any other design enhancements that might be made in the future.

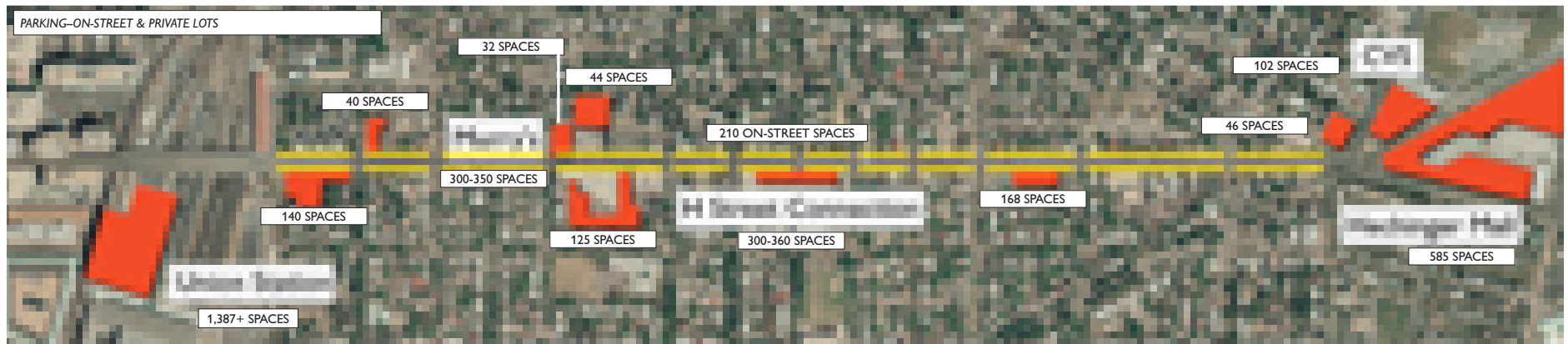
Existing traffic volumes were obtained for the signalized intersections of H Street/6th Street and H Street/13th Street, from the District of Columbia Department of Public Works, Bureau of Transportation Services. A field reconnaissance was conducted to obtain the existing lane usage, signal phasing, and signal timings for each intersection. The current posted speed limit along H Street is 25 miles per hour however, peak period traffic is often observed to be moving significantly faster than the posted speed limit.

Intersection capacity analyses were performed for the A.M. and P.M. peak hours at the H Street/6th Street intersection and for the A.M. peak hour at the H Street/13th Street intersection. The capacity analyses are based on methods outlined by the Transportation Research Board's Special Report 209 Third Edition: Highway Capacity Manual (HCM), 2000. Levels of Service (LOS) for a capacity analysis range from 'A' (best) to 'F' (worst), as described in the report Appendix. The traffic signals are controlled by the DC DPW computerized signal system and both signals operate on an 80-second cycle length during both the A.M. and P.M. peak

Existing Capacity Analysis

Roadway Intersection	Delay & Direction of Travel	Level of Service Delay (in seconds/vehicle)	
		A.M. Peak Hour	P.M. Peak Hour
H Street/6th Street (signalized intersection)	Total Delay	B (15.0)	C (21.6)
	Northbound	C (23.5)	C (22.1)
	Eastbound	B (10.5)	C (24.7)
	Westbound	B (12.7)	A (9.4)
H Street/13th Street (signalized intersection)	Total Delay	B (15.8)	B (16.7)
	Northbound	C (30.0)	C (22.7)
	Southbound	B (18.7)	B (18.9)
	Eastbound	A (9.8)	B (17.7)
	Westbound	B (15.4)	A (9.1)

The analyses of existing traffic volumes indicate that both intersections operate at acceptable Levels of Service during both A.M. and P.M. peak hours. An operational Level of Service of 'E' or higher is generally considered to be 'acceptable' for an urban street like H Street, during a peak hour. The above intersection capacity analyses of the H Street/6th Street and H Street/13th Street sample intersections, along with supplemental field observations, indicate that H Street currently operates with reserve or excess capacity during the peak weekday hours, west of the Maryland Avenue/Florida Avenue/Benning Road intersection. Average daily traffic volumes are significantly heavier along Benning Road, east of the Maryland Avenue/Florida Avenue/Benning Road intersection, and as a result, those intersections likely operate at lower Levels of Service (LOS). (Note: The District Department of Transportation was not able to provide



the Consultants with the data for calculating the LOS for the 5-Road Intersection.)

As part of this revitalization effort, the H Street redevelopment team is proposing to reconfigure the H Street/Benning Road/Maryland Avenue/Florida Avenue intersection to allow for landscaping opportunities at the corridor's eastern gateway. This reconfiguration is proposed primarily for pedestrian safety and aesthetic reasons; however it should also provide an opportunity to improve traffic conditions at a primary commuter intersection. It is recommended that the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) conduct a traffic study in order to assess the traffic implications of any geometric improvements

Parking Analysis

The H Street corridor currently contains both on-street and off-street parking within the study area. On-street parking is generally available along H Street during all times except during the period of the predominant flow of commuter traffic in the morning and in the evening. As a result of these existing parking restrictions, several H Street business owners have complained about the restrictions as hindering customer access to the business locations during the restricted times. On-street parking is generally restricted along H Street along the north side of the street (along the westbound traffic side) from 7:00 – 9:00 AM and on the south side of the street (along the eastbound traffic side) during 4:00 – 6:30 PM. A mix of metered (2-hour parking permitted Monday through

Friday, 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM) and residentially zoned parking spaces is located on the north-south streets within the study area. The corridor currently contains 336 on-street spaces on H Street, which appear to be primarily used by H Street business customers and merchants.

The off-street parking lots located in the study area currently contain approximately 850 spaces. These lots are generally restricted for patrons of the commercial and institutional uses located along H Street and are not for use by the general public. The one lot, which contains general public parking, is located at the intersection of H Street and 3rd Street and contains approximately 110 spaces. This lot is used by commuters on weekdays but could be available for other general parking on weekday evenings and weekends. The remaining 740 off-street spaces are located in the other off-street lots contained in the H Street study area.

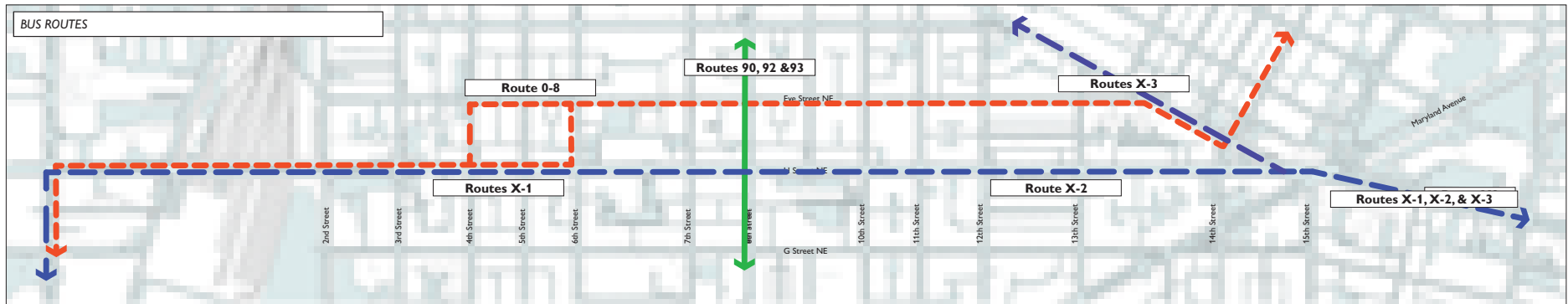
Parking opportunities in the H Street corridor are dependant upon future H Street development because there could be more off-street parking made available in the future as buildings are removed or added, according to the development plan. However, the following two existing locations could potentially help to serve a portion of the off-street parking needs in the H Street corridor:

Union Station. There is currently a significant amount of parking (1,387 spaces) located at Union Station and there could potentially be additional development located here in the future. As a result, assuming that the parking located here

in the future would be adequate enough to meet the future Union Station parking demand and the demand generated by any additional future development located at Union Station, some of the future parking could potentially be available for use by other future development located in the H Street corridor:

Hechinger Commons Shopping Center: The parking lot for the Hechinger Commons Shopping Center could potentially be made available for shared parking use with H Street corridor commercial/institutional uses during non-shopping center business hours. For example, people who drive to H Street destinations during the evening could potentially use the Hechinger Commons Shopping Center parking lot after the shopping center stores close. However, this shared parking arrangement would likely require some sort of formal agreement between the shopping center owner(s) and H Street businesses. In addition, the Hechinger Commons Shopping Center could also potentially charge for the use of its extra parking spaces that are regularly unused (e.g. spaces located the furthest from the shopping center) during shopping center business hours.

Union Station generally has higher parking occupancies during weekday business hours, while shopping centers such as the Hechinger Commons Shopping Center typically have higher occupancy rates during evening weekdays and mid-day on Saturday. Businesses located along H Street likely have greater parking occupancies during weekday business hours and mid-



day on Saturday. Union Station and Hechinger Commons are located at each end of the corridor and would likely be useful as local off-street 'overflow' parking for people who could not find other off-street or on-street parking along H Street. Both of these potential off-street parking locations would be made more accessible by a future light rail/bus transit or shuttle bus line along H Street, which would link the commercial uses along H Street to the parking locations. Also, the likely success of using these parking facilities for H Street commercial establishments will depend on the nature of the area as a destination.

Bus Transit Conditions

The H Street corridor is served by the following bi-directional Metrobus routes: X1, X2, X3, D8, 90, 92, and 93. The X1 and X2 routes serve the entire length of the corridor. The X3, D8, 90, 92, and 93 routes have stops located at key intersections along H Street, and the 90, 92, and 93 routes all have a stop at 8th Street, which is the study area's midpoint and connect the H Street community south to Capitol Hill and Eastern Market, and across the Anacostia River:

The end points for the X1 Metrobus route are located at the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station and the State Department in Foggy Bottom. The X2 route travels between the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station and Lafayette Square, and the X3 Metrobus route travels between the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station and McLean Gardens in northwest Washington, D.C. The D8 bus route travels between the Washington Hospital Center and Union Station, Route 90 travels between the Anacostia Metrorail station and McLean

Gardens, and routes 92 and 93 both travel between the Congress Heights Metrorail station and McLean Gardens.

Metrobus routes and key transit transfer points easily connect the H Street Corridor to virtually all major employment and population centers in the District of Columbia, including: Downtown, Capitol Hill, the Washington Hospital Center, and the U Street Corridor. The bus routes provide direct access to key transfer points located at the Union Station, Gallery Place-Chinatown, New York Avenue Metrorail station (under construction), Anacostia, and Minnesota Avenue Metrorail stations.

Overall frequency of service along the H Street corridor is very good, with 15-30 minute headways for most buses during off-peak hours and every 10-20 minutes during peak hours. Weekend service averages between 20-45 minute headways. Some community members complain that the buses are over-crowded during some off-peak periods, particularly during the middle of the day.

Metrobus stops are located every two blocks along H Street in the study area. Approximately half of the Metrobus stops are sheltered stops. Most of the Metrobus stops located in the study area appear to be heavily utilized, and the frequent number of buses stopping along H Street, do not appear to significantly impede the traffic flow during rush periods.

The following table provides the weekday ridership and average number of passengers per hour for the seven Metrobus routes, which serve the H Street study area.

Existing Metrobus H Street Routes and Ridership

Route	Origin	Destination	Weekday Ridership	Avg # of Riders per Hour
D8	Washington Hospital Center	Union Station	5,002	51
X1	Minnesota Avenue Station	State Dept in Foggy Bottom	1,684	46
X2	Minnesota Avenue Station	Lafayette Square	16,333	84
X3	Minnesota Avenue Station	McLean Gardens NW	1,684	46
90	Anacostia Metrorail Station	McLean Gardens NW	17,128	50
92, 93	Congress Heights Station	McLean Gardens NW	17,128	50

'Metrobus Performance Assessment Report', July 2002



Bicycle Conditions

The following bicycle-related characteristics currently exist in the study area, which affect the quality of the local bicycling environment:

- On-street parking is generally restricted along H Street along the north side of the street (along the westbound traffic side) during 7:00 – 9:00 AM and on the south side of the street (along the eastbound traffic side) during 4:00 – 6:30 PM;
- Traffic volume along H Street is consistently heavy with speeds that appear to be in excess of 35 mph;
- There is limited room available between on-street parked cars and the traffic lane for safe cycling;
- Sidewalks along H Street are narrow (less than 6 feet in some locations) and have heavy foot traffic;
- Blocks are short, with frequent curb cuts and intersections, which presents a cyclist with frequent potential vehicular conflict locations;
- Relatively heavy traffic volumes and confusing traffic patterns at the H Street intersection with Benning Road, Bladensburg Road, Florida Avenue, and Maryland Avenue, are difficult for cyclists to negotiate; and
- The Hopscotch Bridge, which has fast-moving traffic and no curbside parking, provides the most direct street access between the H Street corridor and Downtown. For many bicyclists, the steep grade on the bridge is a factor that is difficult to climb and can be dangerous to descend,

thus discouraging cyclist movement. However, there is alternative access between Union Station and H Street via 3rd, G and F Streets.

H Street is neither an official or unofficial on-road bike route. However, the streets located to the immediate north and south of H Street form a dense grid of streets, with relatively light and slow-moving (less than 25 mph) traffic volumes, which makes the local neighborhoods pleasant for bicycling. H Street is connected to two official 'on-road' bike routes, which are located along 4th and 6th Streets. Both 4th Street and 6th Street have striped bicycle lanes in one direction, along the blocks south of H Street. 4th and 6th Streets connect the H Street corridor with Union Station, the extensive bicycle lane network on Capitol Hill, the National Mall, and Anacostia.

Two 'unofficial bike routes' located along 12th Street, NE, and Maryland Ave, NE, also intersect with H Street at its eastern end, and connect the H Street corridor with neighborhoods throughout the Northeast Quadrant of the District, as well as to the Anacostia watershed. K Street NE, which is located two blocks to the north of H Street, is an 'unofficial bike route' that provides direct access to downtown Washington, D.C. and the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

The Metropolitan Branch Trail is a multi-use, on-road and off-road bike trail, which connects the neighborhoods of northeast D.C. and Union Station (located to the south), with residential, recreational, and commercial nodes located in Silver Spring, Maryland. Overall, H Street is not very bicycle-

oriented, however, its location within a dense grid of residential streets (many of which are either official or unofficial bike routes) with low traffic volumes, situates it within a local area with a pleasant bicycling environment. H Street is also located within close proximity to many significant commercial and recreational activity centers within the District of Columbia.

Pedestrian Conditions

Pedestrian traffic is generally moderate to fairly heavy along H Street, with significantly more people observed crossing the north-south cross-streets along H Street, than H Street itself. With the exception of 5th Street, all of the H Street intersections contained in the study area are signalized and have double-lined crosswalks, which appear to have been recently painted and are clearly visible. The lengths of the green/walk signal 'phases' at each of the intersections appear to be adequate for the elderly and disabled to safely cross H Street and all of the cross-streets along H Street.

In general, pedestrian traffic in the study area does not appear to impact vehicular traffic traveling along H Street, due to a lack of 'jay-walking' and/or large pedestrian volumes crossing H Street. This is likely due to the wide cross section of H Street, the relatively fast travel speed of traffic traveling along H Street, and the lack of adequate crossing gaps, all of which, make H Street unattractive for crossing at times other than during the pedestrian signal phases.

Truck Loading Issues

Illegally parked commercial delivery vehicles are a citywide issue. Trucks that double park in travel lanes create a 'bottleneck' effect when through vehicles are forced to merge into fewer travel lanes. This results in traffic congestion in the city's commercial districts during peak and non-peak time periods.

Commercial delivery vehicles currently park in loading/unloading areas located behind buildings along H Street, in off-street parking lots located in front of buildings where available, or on H Street, where there is no off-street delivery space available. Thus, there currently appears to be a Free Loading Zone parking strategy in place (see Appendix), along H Street in the study area.

Three other more sophisticated on-street commercial parking strategies, which could potentially be implemented in the future, include: Commercial Permit Parking, Metered Zone Parking, and Premium (Exclusive) Zone Parking. Each strategy has numerous features, advantages, and disadvantages, which are listed in the Appendix.

The future H Street commercial community, along with the District government, should determine which on-street commercial delivery parking strategy would be the most

appropriate for the H Street study area. The determination of the most appropriate future strategy, however, will likely have to wait until a redevelopment plan is formulated and implemented along the H Street study area.

Transit Enhancements (Planned)

In the fall of 2000, the District of Columbia's Department of Transportation (DDOT) and Office of Planning (OP) entered into a joint project with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to conduct a preliminary analysis of 12 transit corridors that may provide opportunities for improving mobility within the District of Columbia. Identification of the corridors selected for study was based on the District's 1997 A Transportation Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan for the Nation's Capital and WMATA's 1999 Transit Service Expansion Plan. Two of the twelve corridors that were studied utilized the H Street corridor for a portion of the routing: one connected Woodley Park Metrorail Station to Minnesota Avenue Metrorail Station, and one connected Georgetown to the RFK Stadium Armory Metrorail Station. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 produced an initial screening of the corridors based on mobility or ridership service potential, potential relief for the Metro system within the region's central core, construction potential, and other factors. As part of Phase 2, a second screening was

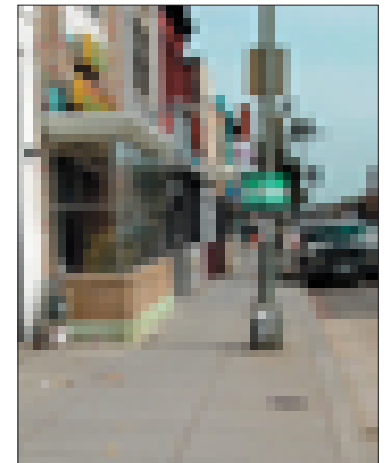
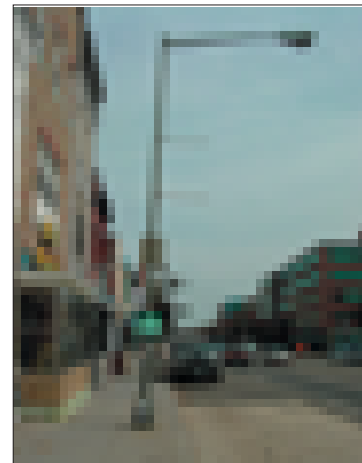
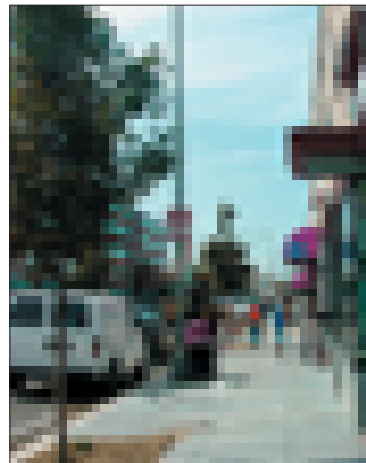
conducted to organize corridors into: 1) corridors that appear to be good candidates for more detailed planning, 2) corridors for consideration in a special East of the Anacostia River.

A third screening was then conducted considering appropriateness for advancement to a more detailed level of planning, service to District Residents, opportunities for transit supported economic development, and other factors. The purpose of the third screening was to identify the two or three corridors that appear to be the most promising corridors for advancement to a more detailed level of planning as part of a federal alternative analysis. The Woodley Park Metro to Minnesota Avenue Metro via H Street was one of the three selected corridors.

The Woodley Park Metro to Minnesota Avenue Metro corridor is projected to serve between 22,000 to 26,500 daily riders by 2025.

A map of the proposed transit lines illustrating to which centers H Street might be more directly linked is available at http://www.ddot.dc.gov/information/documents/frames/transit_study.shtm.

DDOT is planning a more detailed study of this route in 2003. The study is expected to take one to two years and would determine a more specific alignment for the transit corridor.



5.4 Public Realm

The quality of the public environment has a powerful influence on our perceptions of a place. The public realm—the publicly-owned and controlled spaces between buildings—and the elements that define it—paving materials, street trees, and furnishings—all contribute to our overall impression of place. Streetscapes can be used to define districts and create identifiable places or to tie a linear corridor together to be understood as a single place. Local examples illustrate how streetscape improvements can support place-making and revitalization strategies. For example, the ceremonial arch and streetlights in China Town reinforce the neighborhood's unique heritage and the streetscape improvements along Pennsylvania Avenue NW reflect the street's symbolic and ceremonial roles as the link between the Capitol and White House.

Entries to the Corridor

H Street NE has distinct eastern and western entries, each presenting opportunities for improvement under the Strategic Development Plan.

Eastern Entry. Since the early days of the District, the intersection of H Street, Bladensburg Road, Florida Avenue, Benning Road, 15th Street and Maryland Avenue has been an important point of entry. Under the L'Enfant Plan, the intersection marked the eastern edge of the new National Capitol and the place where the city grid met the Bladensburg

Turnpike, the early link between the District and the cities of Annapolis and Bladensburg.

Over the years, as areas east of the District have grown, the intersection has been reconfigured to serve increases in commuter traffic, especially along Benning Road, one of only 5 bridges across the Anacostia River. Over time, these improvements have tended to favor vehicular rather than pedestrian movements, making the intersection particularly difficult to cross on foot. The current configuration, with its lack of green space, areas for pedestrians, and streetscape amenities, creates a significant barrier between the H Street, the surrounding neighborhoods, and Hechinger Mall.

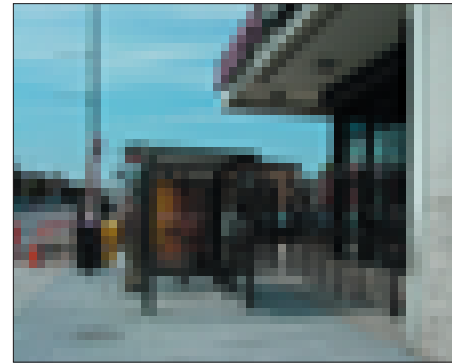
Fortunately, the L'Enfant Plan provides a useful foundation for thinking about potential improvements to the intersection. As with other sites in the District where diagonal avenues crossed, the intersection was shown on the L'Enfant plan as a hatched circle (please refer to illustration on page 14), suggesting its potential for treatment as a special public place. This potential is highlighted in the National Capitol Planning Commission's recently adopted Monuments and Memorials Plan. The Plan described the intersection as follows:

A potential commemorative feature at this location could be incorporated within the existing and future site conditions as the intersection of Maryland and Florida Avenues is redesigned. The reconfigured space could provide

a landscape setting befitting this important node within the Maryland Avenue Monumental Corridor. Circulations improvements could include a traffic circle that would give a new presence to the existing intersection. This new setting could strengthen community identity while providing a context for a medium size commemorative feature.

Western Entry. The Hopscotch Bridge defines the western end of the corridor. The Bridge, constructed in the 1970s to serve commuter traffic, was constructed in a utilitarian fashion similar to many highway bridges in more suburban settings in the region. The rise of the bridge acts a visual barrier between the H Street NE corridor and the Downtown core, isolating the neighborhood and contributing to the sense that the street is a mere highway.

The bridge's design as a continuous arch also affects the potential for directly connecting existing and new development to the street. Existing buildings along the bridge, including the Capital Children's Museum and the office buildings west of the railroad tracks, do not open directly onto the bridge and views are blocked from lower floors. The continuous slope also presents challenges for the Station Place and Union Station Air Rights developments. The slope limits opportunities for new buildings to open directly onto the bridge and create a more attractive streetscape and comfortable pedestrian environment.



The pedestrian environment along the three block length of the bridge is stark and inhospitable. The bridge is flanked by high solid protective barriers, giving the bridge a canyon feel with no streetscape, no trees and no activity. The solid barriers on the sides of the bridge have been dressed up with public art, and while this helps by adding color, it does not solve the fundamental problems with the bridge that make this a hostile place for pedestrians, as well as a barrier between the heart of the City and the H Street corridor.

Streetscape Conditions

There is no clear design of streetscape on the corridor and much of what exists is in disrepair. Street furnishings are either non-existent or inconsistently located. For instance, there is no regular pattern or style of trash receptacles. While street sweeping is regularly performed, the lack of trash receptacles contributes to excessive littering that is evident throughout the corridor. Similarly there is no overall streetscape design concept to guide the location of bus shelters. As a result, a

bus shelter was constructed in the center of the circulation path near the Murry's grocery store and has become an obstacle to pedestrians on the sidewalk.

Lighting on the corridor is provided from overhead cobra style streetlights. These fixtures are designed to efficiently light the vehicular travel ways, but do nothing for the pedestrian environment. Smaller scale pedestrian fixtures, which add character and warmth to the walkways, are lacking.

Tree pits are not consistently located, edged or sized. Many tree pits have a metal edge protruding up several inches that is in disrepair, causing tripping hazards. In a few locations, tree grates have been added over the tree pits to improve the walking surface. Although, new street trees (maples, consistent with District policy) have been added to a few areas within the corridor, such as at the H Street Connection; overall the existing trees are in poor condition. There is no consistent spacing of the tree locations; many are missing, dead or dying.

The width of walkways is another important consideration. The walkway widths vary considerably along the corridor for a number of reasons. Block sections include varying sidewalks from approximately 5 to 15 feet, an approximately 9-12 feet wide parking lane and approximately 11 foot wide travel lanes. The changing size of parking lanes and sidewalk widths serves no apparent function and results in an inconsistent streetscape. In addition, other intrusions reduce the width of sidewalks, including tree boxes, bay window projections, utility meters, and poorly located bus shelters. In some locations the combination of narrow walkway width and physical intrusions results in walkways that are much too narrow.

The type and condition of the sidewalk paving is also an issue in the corridor. Several different combinations of brick and concrete, concrete alone, or brick alone can be found throughout the corridor. In many areas the walkways are in disrepair and have been haphazardly patched. The sidewalks do not tie the area together with a consistent design concept or material.



6 CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The assessments summarized in previous sections of this report were undertaken to help the planning team and community

- 1) understand issues affecting the vitality and attractiveness of the corridor; and
- 2) identify opportunities which could serve as the foundation for the plan's development and implementation.

A summary of these challenges and opportunities follows.

6.1 Land Use, Zoning & Development

Challenges

- The presence of vacant sites, storefronts, and whole buildings, along with the poor condition of many occupied buildings, contributes to perceptions of the area as unwelcoming and unsafe. The use of solid security grates and unshielded security lighting further reinforces perceptions of the corridor as a risky place for investment;
- With the notable exception of a half dozen sites, the size and depth of parcels limit their attractiveness to investment and redevelopment. Typical modern commercial buildings, especially office and mixed-use buildings, require a much larger footprint than is possible on a small, shallow site;
- The current pattern of ownership—small parcels in separate ownership—limits opportunities for larger-scale (half to whole block) preservation and redevelopment. The patterns makes it difficult to consolidate contiguous blocks of

land to support modern building requirements or encourage multi-building preservation and adaptive projects;

- With minor exceptions, no formal controls or incentives exist to ensure that the corridor's historic buildings are preserved and that new buildings be designed to relate well to their surroundings;
- Many new buildings along the corridor follow a suburban development model, with front or side rather than rear yard parking, minimal storefront display space, signage directed to automobile traffic rather than pedestrians, and building materials and details out of step with the historic context of the street and surrounding; and
- Current zoning provisions tend to promote the development of single use buildings with suburban site configurations, such as the CVS and Auto Zone, over developments such as mixed use buildings with ground floor retail, second story office and 2-3 floors of apartments.

Opportunities

- The proximity of the western end of the corridor to metro stations at Union Station and New York Avenue (planned) greatly increases the potential for new residential and mixed-use development and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings;
- The presence of several large, mostly vacant sites under single ownership (e.g. the former Sears site) offer important development opportunities;
- With financial assistance, guidelines, zoning changes, and off-

site parking, barriers to the development of small sites will be removed;

- The special qualities of the corridor and surrounding neighborhood can be expressed through the conservation and adaptive reuse of buildings and new initiatives to celebrate and interpret history. Preservation incentives and interpretation programs can help reinforce the corridor's character and the livability of surrounding neighborhoods; and
- Recent and planned investment in arts facilities on the east of the corridor can serve as catalysts for the reuse of existing historic buildings to house a range of arts related uses—from art galleries and studios, artists live/work spaces, restaurants, performance venues, and small specialty shops.

6.2 Retail Environment

Challenges

- The current mix of uses along the corridor does not provide the range or quality of goods and services sought by neighborhood residents or shoppers from other parts of the city; nor does it contribute to the creation of a lively street environment. While residents are dissatisfied with the existing mix of uses, nearby shopping destinations present significant competition and existing market demand will only support retail and restaurants uses in approximately half of the corridor's frontage. Early efforts must focus on building a critical mass of quality destinations in key locations;

- Because H Street lacks a distinct image, retailers searching for space are more inclined to investigate neighborhoods with an established identity and higher quality public environment. There is a need to (re)introduce investors and merchants to the corridor and sell them on its potential;
- Many existing businesses do not present an attractive face to the street. Signage is outdated, display windows are blocked and doorways are not well lit and inviting;
- Local retailers and neighborhood residents identified safety and security as central concerns. The lack of street lighting, loitering and the presence of vacant and poorly maintained storefronts contribute to the street's image as an unsafe place;
- The corridor's transformation will be achieved incrementally. It will take several years of hard work and commitment to realize the community's vision. All steps in the right direction, even small ones, should be celebrated. Over time, a record of success, even on a modest scale, will build the corridor's reputation in the marketplace; and
- The benefits of an improved H Street will not be distributed evenly among existing businesses. While many will flourish as new development, new customers, and new merchants are attracted to the corridor; some will not. While unfortunate, this dynamic is an unavoidable consequence of improvement.

Opportunities

- H Street offers a tremendous opportunity for entrepreneurial retailers. With rents below most other neighborhoods, the corridor is affordable to start-up and one-of-a-kind businesses. This phenomenon remains an essential component of U Street's success story;
- Giving residents shopping opportunities closer to home will establish a strong customer base for existing and new businesses, bring new life to the street, promote a stronger sense of community, and put H Street on the 'map' of District shopping destinations;
- Many retailers on H Street have the business sensibility and product offerings to thrive in a revitalized environment. Helping these retailers survive and thrive in a more competitive environment will be critical to maintain the corridor's unique and special character; and
- While small lots and block fronts under multiple ownership limit present obstacles to large scale development, the same conditions represent opportunities for smaller scale, more incremental improvements by local property owners and entrepreneurs.

6.3 Traffic, Transit & Parking

Challenges

- Balancing the needs of commuters, using H Street as a connection to one of the few Anacostia River bridge crossings and travelers bound for H Street and neighborhood destinations is a sensitive challenge;
- As a principal commuter route, H Street carries a significant volume of traffic during peak travel periods, often at speeds that negatively impact the pedestrian environment;
- Conditions for pedestrian traveling along sidewalks and crossing H Street are less than optimal; and
- The lack of public parking - both off- and on- street — creates difficulties for shoppers and increases competition for spaces along side streets and in the neighborhood. Without additional publicly available spaces, it will remain difficult to attract new retailers, restaurants, entertainment venues, small-scale infill projects and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

Opportunities

- Traffic control system are proposed to be re-timed to encourage reasonable travel speeds;
- The introduction of peak period transit lanes that extend to the outlying suburbs would improve regional access to the District of Columbia's central business district as well as to the H Street corridor;
- The introduction of Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit along the corridor would improve the corridor's connection to neighborhoods and commercial districts throughout the city, including downtown, increasing the corridor's attractiveness and the visibility of its businesses;
- More visible crosswalks, widening sidewalks, the possibility of 24-7 parking lanes (as a protective buffer to moving vehicular traffic) and improved transit facilities and access, would enhance the pedestrian environment and improves access to local businesses along the corridor; and
- The possibility of lifting the rush hour restrictions on curb lane parking would provide convenient parking spaces for local businesses along the corridor.

6.4 Public Realm

Challenges

- With few expectations, streetscape conditions along H Street are poor: Street trees are nonexistent or in bad condition, no pedestrian scaled lights exist, and elements like benches, bus shelters, trash receptacles, and bike racks

are few and far between;

- The condition of public spaces and rights of way at either end of H Street makes the corridor feel isolated from nearby destinations and the balance of the District. As a place for pedestrians, the intersection of H Street, Maryland Avenue and Florida Avenue is unsatisfactory—walking in this area is an uncomfortable experience;
- Similarly, the portion from Hopscotch Bridge leading into the main H Street corridor is unhospitable and lacking in pedestrian amenity;
- The side streets connecting the H Street frontage to the neighborhoods are in particularly poor shape. In many locations, the side yards of corner buildings have been paved, used for trash cans and rubbish, or for illegal parking. As generally uncared for space, many sideyards have become popular locations for loitering; and
- Several factors reinforce perception of the corridor as unsafe and unwelcoming - poor quality streetscapes, buildings that are vacant and/or in disrepair, grates blocking storefronts and the corridor's reputation for having a high crime rate. This negative image of the corridor affects the ability of the corridor to thrive.

Opportunities

- By making a clear and dedicated improvement to H Street's streetscape, maintenance, and safety, the City has the opportunity to alert the business and development communities that the DC government is a serious and invested partner in this corridor's revitalization;
- The proposed redevelopment of the Union Station Air Rights presents a significant opportunity to improve the western gateway into the corridor. The proposed development suggests direct pedestrian access to H Street. In the development of this and other properties that front the bridge, every effort should be made to provide visual and physical connections (especially on the pedestrian scale) from these developments to H Street;
- Modifications to the intersection of H Street, Maryland Avenue and Florida Avenue will improve the pedestrian experience, infill the street frontage, create a visual terminus and reduce the impact of surrounding parking lots; and
- Any transit improvements within the corridor may require the reconstruction of the street to provide the transit lanes. This becomes an opportunity to correct the narrow sidewalk width and poor condition of the walkways and to create coordinated streetscape design. The existing 90-foot right-of-way within the corridor can provide adequate travel lanes, transit lanes, sidewalks and rush hour street parking.